

T H E
 A B O L I T I O N
 O F T H E
 S L A V E T R A D E
 CONSIDERED IN A
 RELIGIOUS POINT OF VIEW.
 A S E R M O N
 PREACHED BEFORE THE CORPORATION
 O F T H E
 C I T Y O F O X F O R D,
 AT S T. M A R T I N ' s C H U R C H,
 On Sunday, February 3, 1788.
 B Y W I L L I A M A G U T T E R, M. A.
 O F S T. M A R Y M A G D A L E N C O L L E G E.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. F. and C. R I V I N G T O N, St. Paul's
 Church-yard; and G. P H I L I P S, George-yard,
 Lombard-street. MDCCLXXXVIII.

TO GRANVILLE SHARP, ESQ.

CHAIRMAN

Of the COMMITTEE of the SOCIETY
instituted for the Purpose of abolishing the
AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE;

A GENTLEMAN eminently distinguished for
his publick, his private, and his Christian
Virtues ;

Who has been conspicuous in supporting the
Cause of Humanity for many Years, at
great Expence, and with unremitting Zeal ;

This DISCOURSE

is humbly dedicated, .

by his most obliged,

most obedient humble Servant,

The AUTHOR.

ACTS xvii. 26.

God hath made of one blood all the nations of men, to dwell on all the Face of the Earth.

THERE is no truth more obvious to the simple conceptions of man, than that the human race have natural rights, and common relations to each other ; yet, there is no truth which may be more easily overlooked, or sooner perverted, when the principles of ambition, avarice, and cruelty, have blinded the understanding, and hardened the heart. Men's judgements are easily bribed by a vicious inclination ; and they will soon persuade themselves to believe that to be true

which they are unwilling to discover to be false.

This observation is strictly applicable to the case of Slavery ; a case, which now promises to undergo a thorough discussion : not, it is hoped, merely to please the speculations of the curious, or to interest the feelings of the humane ; but to vindicate the wrongs of thousands ; to restrain the hand of cruelty ; and to let the oppressed go free *.

The subject of Slavery has been examined in a moral, a historical, a political, and a commercial point of view, by authors of distinguished eminence ; whose clearness of comprehension and powers of reasoning have honoured and advanced the cause of humanity in which they have warmly engaged.

* To the honour of the illustrious Bishop Warburton, let it be recorded, that he was the first who openly stood forth and condemned this conduct in England. The consistency and the perseverance of the Quakers in this great cause, of humanity must highly recommend them to every friend of religion and liberty.

It is my intention in this discourse to consider the subject in a religious point of view.

Slavery, or servitude, was indeed connived at by the Jewish Laws ; but then it was restrained by wise and merciful regulations : and we know that God winked at the times of that ignorance, when men could not receive a purer law, or be influenced by better motives than those temporary rewards and punishments which were the sanctions of that dispensation.

But “ God hath made of one blood all the
 “ natives of the earth.” Creation is a comprehensive system of goodness ; and the various parts thereof are so admirably connected together, that, if “ one member suffer, all the
 “ members suffer with it.” This goodness, discoverable in creation, is a communicative principle, flowing from the Author of all life and blessedness, and imparting itself to all his creatures ; and his creatures are so far blessed, and rendered capable of superior

rior enjoyments, as they are influenced by this communicative goodness ; and, in consequence thereof, become instrumental in promoting each other's happiness.

All the relations of humanity, all the ties of kindred, are established for this benevolent purpose ; that we may feel, reason, and act as members one of another. For “ have we not “ *all one Father ?* hath not One GOD created “ us ? Why do we deal treacherously every “ man against his brother, by profaning the “ covenant of our fathers ?” [Mal. xi. 10.] “ The LORD He is the God ; it is he who “ hath made us, and not we ourselves. We “ are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” [Ps. c. 3.] “ O LORD, thou art “ *our Father* ; we are the clay, and thou art “ the potter ; and we are all the work of “ thy hand.” [Isaiah lxiv. 8.] “ Doubtless “ thou art *our Father* ; thou, O LORD, art “ *our Father*, our Redeemer ; thy name is “ from everlasting.” [Isaiah lxiii. 16.]

If then God be our Father, surely we are all brethren ; and this sacred relationship, “ this covenant of Brother,” is not to be set aside by any distance of place, or by any accidental difference of appearances, or peculiarity of advantages. Wherever we see the human form, we see an image of God, and a brother according to the Flesh. Justly then might we call out to the African Trader, and the Indian Planter, if they had but hearts to hear, “ Sirs, ye are brethren, why do you “ wrong one to another ?” [Acts vii. 26.]

If this relationship be established by *Creation*, how much more important, more extensive, and more sacred, must it appear, when considered with a view to *Redemption*. “ God was manifest in the flesh to reconcile “ a world of sinful creatures to himself, and “ to unite them in the bonds of eternal “ amity and love.” He came to destroy the kingdom of darkness, evil, and misery ; and to establish his everlasting kingdom of light and truth ; of goodness and righteousness.

The extent of this great plan of mercy is as wide as the misery of sin, as universal as the empire of death. “ Christ tasted death for *every* “ *man*; there is one Mediator between God and “ *man*, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for *all*, to be testified in due “ time (or rather *καιροῖς ἰδίοις*, in proper seasons).” [1 Tim. ii. 6.] We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the “ Righteous; and He is the propitiation for “ our sins; and not for ours only, but also “ for the sins of *the whole world*.” [1 John ii. 2.] “ For as in Adam *all* die, even so in “ Christ shall *all* be made alive.” [1 Cor. xv. 22.]

All men, then, are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and are capable of being translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ. Gentiles and Jews, Heathens and Christians, on their belief of the Gospel, are fellow heirs together in a glorious immortality; for they are now the adopted children of one common parent, the purchased property of the same Saviour; and

and the same new and living way into the true holy of holies, even into Heaven itself, is open to all, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The great and comprehensive mercy of the Gospel has united men more closely in the bonds of mutual charity. The endearing term of *brother*, as pointing out a special relationship between man and man, is there introduced. If I stand without excuse for injuring my brother after the flesh, how much more inexcusable am I, if, to increase my wealth, to flatter my vanity, and to exercise a wanton cruelty, I injure and degrade my brother after the Spirit, for whom Christ died ?

The mild and benevolent spirit of Christianity, in proportion as it prevailed among the nations which became converted to the Gospel, abolished the servile condition, and taught mankind that the lowest as well as the highest, the ignorant as well as the wise, had

had rights which were sacred, and prospects which were eternal.

The happy revival of literature and religious knowledge at the time of the Reformation abolished all the remains of domestic slavery in our own country; but, about the same period*, a more systematic and more ~~evil~~ ^{civil} species of slavery was introduced; I mean, that of working the Western Islands, which the Spaniards had almost depopulated by their cruelties, by means of slaves imported from Africa. This evil is the more dreadful, because it is far removed from the observation of the wise and the good; it is practised by the avaricious and the cruel, who are interested either to conceal their outrages by falsehood, or to defend them by sophistry. It is practised in all the horrid luxuriance of iniquity by the English, a nation who boast that they are free, and profess that they are

* In the year 1563 the English commenced this most horrid traffick. The Portuguese set the example to the rest of Europe.

Christians. It is to this practice in particular that I wish to confine your present attention.

The evil consequences of the unnatural and degrading relation of Master and Slave are thus described by an able advocate. “ It
 “ corrupts the morals of the master, by
 “ freeing him from those restraints with
 “ respect to his slave, so necessary for the
 “ controul of the human passions, so bene-
 “ ficial in promoting the practice and con-
 “ firming the habit of virtue.—It is dan-
 “ gerous to the master, because his oppression
 “ excites implacable resentment and hatred in
 “ the slave; and the extreme misery of his
 “ condition continually prompts him to risque
 “ the gratification of them; and his situation
 “ daily furnishes the opportunity.—To the
 “ slave it communicates all the afflictions of
 “ life, without leaving for him scarce any of
 “ its pleasures; and it depresses the excellency
 “ of his nature, by denying the ordinary
 “ means and motives of improvement. It is
 “ dangerous to the State, by its corruption of
 “ those

“ those citizens on whom its safety depends ;
 “ and by admitting within it a multitude of
 “ persons who, being excluded from the com-
 “ mon benefits of the constitution, are in-
 “ terested in scheming its destruction *.”

But how are these evils aggravated, when considered in a religious point of view—as affecting the slave and the master—the interests of the Gospel, and the welfare of the nation which tolerates such conduct !

In the extensive kingdoms of Africa, the most horrid wars, rapine, and desolation, have been encouraged for more than 200 years, to promote this trade in human blood. Some are entrapped by deceit, but the generality are seized by violence. Their fields are desolated ; their houses are burnt with fire. The mild and peaceable Negro is driven from his comfortable home ; torn from all the tender connections of social life ; branded with a hot iron ; confined on ship-

* Hargrave's Argument in the Case of J. Somerset, 2nd Edit. p. 16.

board amidst chains and nakedness, filth and pestilence. There they are crowded in such numbers, and treated with such cruelty, that death brings a happy release unto thousands, who only experience “ the beginning of sorrows.” For those who escape the dangers of the sea, and endure the hardships of the voyage, new calamities are reserved in store when they arrive at the place of their destination.

Here the complicated evils of slavery properly begin : here they are exposed like cattle in a market ; sent to the distant plantations ; roused before the rising sun ; and employed in the hardest labour ; trembling under the tyranny of a master, who is exercised in scenes of blood, and knows scarce any restraint from the fear of unrighteous laws *.

Here the sad remains of a wretched existence are dragged out ; harrassed by ex-

* The fine for the wilful murder of a Negro is less than twenty shillings.

hausted labour, surrounded with the view of the miseries of their countrymen ; supported by the scanty pittance of the worst food ; deprived of all the comforts of this life ; and uninstructed in any hope of a better. Their lives are not esteemed by their owners of so much value as the life of a beast ; though even the life of his beast a merciful man will regard. Their misery is often so extreme that they seek for refuge in the arms of death. Some lay violent hands on themselves ; and others refuse all sustenance, that they may find that rest in the grave which is denied them by men, by Englishmen, by Christians.

In the British Plantations it is no uncommon thing to behold the insolence of power and the wantonness of cruelty ; to hear the groans of despair, and the cries of deserted infants. “ The plowers plough upon their backs, and make long furrows.” The fruits of the earth are produced amidst tears of blood, and groans of anguish. The prospect to them is hopeless : no industry can re-
gain

gain their freedom, no time can restore them to their native country. No distinction is made ; no respect is paid to age or sex ; but all are crowded together like a herd of brute beasts : and here we behold the wretched effects of this traffick in human blood, to degrade, to corrupt, to brutalize mankind*.

Thus does our brother, for whom Christ died, become vile in our eyes.

Yet this most horrid traffick has continued for ages ; in which, to speak within compass, not less than an hundred millions of the human race have most wretchedly perished, in hunger and in cold, in pestilence and in desolation, without a protector, without a comforter, without an avenger.

Yet the condition of the *Slaves*, though thus humiliating and severe, is infinitely preferable to that of their tyrants and oppress-

* See Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, p. 348.

fors, it being always better to suffer wrong than to inflict it.

But here I am happy to make some exceptions, though I fear they are but few; some Planters there are who treat their Slaves with mildness and compassion. These, although they have not an outward law to claim this, yet “they are a law unto themselves;” and they do not, in the actions of every day, “deny the LORD who bought them.”

It will easily appear how much more deplorable is the state of the cruel Master than that of his suffering Slaves, if we consider his conduct here, as preparatory to an awful and eternal state hereafter.

There are but two Beings whom men worship and obey—these are GOD, who is Love; the Father of mercies and the GOD of all consolation, the Saviour of mankind: and the Devil or Satan, who was a murderer from the beginning, who is the destroyer, who delights in beholding acts of cruelty and blood-

bloodshed. The unrighteous Merchant, and the tyrannical Planter, “ are of their Father
 “ the Devil, and the lusts of their Father
 “ they do.” In his works of darkness they zealously engage, and “ they shall in no wise
 “ lose their reward.”

Of the peace and happiness resulting from benevolence, gentleness, meekness, and forbearance, they have no knowledge or experience: but, by the indulgence of every contrary temper, as cruelty, violence, and revenge; they exclude the Kingdom of Heaven from their souls; they fill up the measure of their iniquities; they lead a life of misery upon earth, which riches cannot console, nor intemperance enliven; and at death they pass into the eternal world, to meet their God and their Judge; to receive the fruit of their own doings; and to reap a full recompence of reward.

These infamous Traders, who have heaped up their riches, “ the price of blood,” and

hardened themselves against their own flesh, will then lift up their eyes in torment, while they see Jesus afar off, and many of their once insulted, degraded, maimed, and murdered Slaves now happy in his bosom. Then perhaps they may beg that one of these may be sent with a drop of water to cool their tongues, because they are “tormented in that flame;” but even this request will then be denied by the Father of Mercies, for “as they shewed no mercy nor compassion on their poor slaves and dependents, so neither shall their Lord have pity on them.”

But this unrighteous traffick in human blood is not more destructive to those concerned in it, than disgraceful to the religion they profess, and to the nation which tolerates their crimes. By their means the holy name of Jesus is blasphemed, and an invincible obstacle thrown in the way, to hinder the glorious Gospel of Christ from being received by these Heathens. Darkness is not more opposite to light than the principles of

of

of this traffick to the spirit of Christianity *. That commands us “ to preach good tidings “ unto the meek;” but these men deliberately withhold from their Slaves all rational instruction, and all religious improvement. The Prince of Peace sends us “ to bind up “ the broken-hearted;” but these men bow down their fellow-creatures by oppression, and “ regard not the cry of the poor destitute.” The spirit of the Gospel “ proclaims liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound :” but these men rivet the chains of slavery ; “ the iron enters into the Negro’s soul,”

* “ Whereas Thou hast given us great honour in the presence of nations around us, and power over remote people which sit in darkness ;

“ We have not profited them by the preaching of thy word, or the example of righteousness ; but have oppressed them, and been a snare unto them.

“ And we have even caused them to abhor thy word because of our iniquities and unrighteous dealings, and have given occasion to the blasphemers to blaspheme.”

King’s Hymns to the Supreme Being, p. 136.

while his mind is left in all the darknefs of ignorance, without one ray of thofe comforts which Chriftianity affords, to ftrengthen with patience, and to animate with hope, them that endure affliction, fuffering wrongfully.

But thefe dreadful crimes are not only the crimes of individuals, but alfo of nations, which are confcious of thefe enormities, and do not interpoſe to reſtrain the fury of the tyrant, and to ſet the oppreſſed free. England is deeply ſtained with this guilt *; ſhe muſt answer for the blood of millions, for ſhe knows, and yet ſhe tolerates, this inhuman traffick. It was one of the fins of Tyre,

* The Spaniard, the French, and the Portugueſe, endeavour to inſtruct, to improve, and to convert their ſlaves: but the Proteſtants the Engliſh do not; nay, it is a notorious fact, that they oppoſe any endeavours towards this Work of Mercy, this Labour of Love. The reaſon is obvious, that, having little or no regard for their own ſouls; they have no concern for thoſe of others.

that she “traded in the persons of men,”
 [Ez. xxvii. 13.]. And if we as a nation resemble her in our sins, we have reason to fear that we shall resemble her in our punishment. “Wherefore, O Nation greatly beloved, let my counsel be acceptable to thee,
 “and break off thy sins by righteousness,
 “and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to
 “the poor [especially to captive Negros], if
 “it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.” [Dan. iv. 27.]

May not the LORD of Heaven and Earth say unto this nation, as he did unto the Israelites of old, “Your hands are defiled
 “with blood, and your fingers with iniquity.
 “None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth
 “for truth. Go to now, therefore, ye rich
 “men; weep and howl for your miseries
 “that shall come upon you; your heart
 “goeth after your covetousness, and your
 “land is defiled with blood. Behold the
 “prayer of the needy, and the voice of the
 “innocent blood which is shed, crieth and
 “entereth

“ entereth the ears of the LORD of Sabbaoth,
 “ for a witness against us.—Shall I not visit
 “ for these things, saith the LORD, shall not my
 “ soul be avenged of such a nation as this ?
 “ Behold, the LORD cometh out of his
 “ place, to punish the inhabitants of the
 “ earth for their iniquity ; the earth also
 “ shall disclose her blood, and shall no more
 “ cover her slain. Vengeance is mine ; I
 “ will repay, saith the LORD.”

The Western Empire is gone from us,
 never to return ; it is given to another more
 righteous than we ; who consecrated the
 sword of resistance by declaring for the
 universal abolition of slavery *. The West
 India islands have been visited with most
 tremendous hurricanes and earthquakes ; by
 these, the cruel traders have been deprived
 of all their unrighteous gain, or have been
 involved with it in one common grave.
 “ Verily, there is a reward for the righteous

* See the Declaration of the Congress in 1774.

“ and

“and for the wicked: doubtless there is a
 “God who judgeth the earth.”

As then the English have been most forward in promoting this abominable trade, “as the blood of the souls of the poor innocents is found in their skirts;” so let the English now stand forward to suppress this disgrace to their country.

Next in guilt to those who perpetrate these abominations are those who, knowing these enormities, do not interfere to prevent them. Every one may do something; he may declare his testimony against violence and wrong; he may appear on the side of humanity, equity, and religion.

Let every man then do what he is able against it, lest the guilt of innocent blood should lie at his door. As we value liberty ourselves, let us glory to make others free; as we have obtained mercy ourselves, so let us never rest, till this mercy
 be

be extended to others, and all tears be wiped from off all faces.

Then by all the glorious attributes of our God and Saviour, which are insulted by this inhuman traffick—by all the laws of divine love, which he has established ; by all the glories of heaven which are displayed to the eye of Faith :—by the common blood which flows in all our veins ; and by the blood of Christ which was shed for the sins of the whole world—by that freedom which is the common birth-right of all, and the distinguishing privilege of Englishmen—by the right-aiming thunderbolts of the Almighty, prepared to execute vengeance on nations which deal in oppression—by the tender ties of domestic connections ; by all the comforts we enjoy here ; and, by all the happiness we expect hereafter ;—let us unite with all our powers to vindicate the English name, to honour the Gospel of Peace, and to avert the judgements of Heaven, by the abolition of the Slave Trade, by “ restraining the fury
“ of

“ of the oppressor,” and by the “ letting
 “ the captive go free.” The poor and af-
 flicted slaves can never know their friends
 and benefactors; “ they indeed cannot re-
 “ compense us; but we shall be recom-
 “ pensed at the resurrection of the just.”

F I N I S.